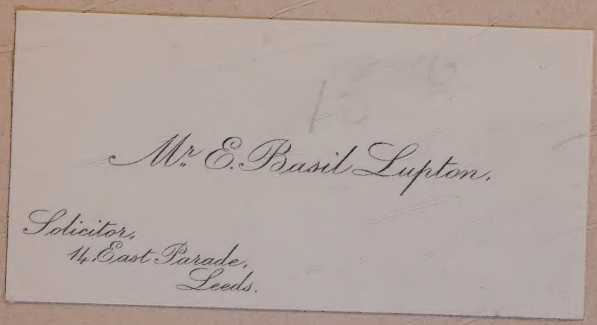
DICKENS THE IMMORTAL

BY

EDWARD BASIL LUPTON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BY
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PREFACE

THOMAS CARLYLE in one of his *Latter-Day Pamphlets* remarks incidentally that the Republic of Letters increases in population at a faster rate than even the Republic of America. The present writer may claim in a modest way some experience of both republics while remaining an English subject.

A friend in London once expressed the opinion that for a popular literary theme Charles Dickens came easily first, with Charles Lamb a fairly good second. Perhaps to-day the third place *longo intervallo* might be assigned to Mr Bernard Shaw. Looking through the book before sending it to the press, one finds Charles Lamb mentioned twice, Bernard Shaw once, while Carlyle's and Scott's names occur repeatedly.

The writer believes that the following

pages contain some measure of new material.

William Shaw's professional card is transcribed from an old number of *The Dickensian* courteously sent to me by the Editor.

E.B.L.

Cambridge, Massachusetts
February 1923

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I. LIFE AND AIMS

THE career of Napoleon Bonaparte among its many far-reaching effects exercised some direct influence on the life of John Dickens, and through him on the circumstances of his distinguished son. The ambitious schemes of the ruler of France kept the British nation busily engaged in defensive preparations, and the navy fully equipped for all emergencies. The elder Dickens filled a minor position in the navy pay-office, a department with a full staff while war remained imminent, a period when the Dickens family enjoyed their due share of comfort and prosperity. The fall of Napoleon was followed by many changes. England gradually returned to the ways of peace. A need for economy involved the discharge of large numbers of those who had been employed in the preparations for war, and who were thus left to adapt themselves to the altered

conditions. John Dickens, losing his clerkship, experienced much difficulty in obtaining any post suited to his capacity. Charles, removed from school, was placed in a factory, where he suffered mental agony in monotonous and uncongenial labour amidst squalid surroundings. The father drifted into insolvency, and was lodged in the Marshalsea, a well-known debtors' prison of those days, and the family endured great privation. However after a while an opportune legacy released the elder Dickens from confinement, and Charles was then enabled to resume his education.

On leaving school the youth served for a time as clerk in lawyers' offices in London, where he made himself proficient in shorthand. Thus equipped, he obtained a post on the staff of the *True Sun,* and afterwards with the *Morning Chronicle* as a reporter. His duties took him to the House of Commons, to the Law Courts, and to political meetings both in town and country. He was well fitted for this work,

and his energy enabled him to rise to a foremost place. His spare hours were occupied in reading fiction, writing stories, sketches, and light plays, with the variety of visits to the theatres, which exercised a strong attraction for him all his life. About this time he thought of adopting the stage as a profession, whereupon he applied to a theatrical manager, but without success. With the publication of some of his light sketches in the *Monthly Magazine* and the *Evening Chronicle,* his life work may be said to have commenced, for these *Sketches by Boz* led to a commission from the newly-established publishing house of Chapman & Hall for the writing of a serial story, that resulted in the conception and production of the world-renowned *Pickwick.*

Here was our author at the early age of twenty-four launched on the flowing tide of fame; buoyed up by genius, special aptitude, prompt decision, and energy; and, delighting in the contrast between his new occupation and the irksome toil

of his youthful days, he soon rose high in popular estimation, and placed himself in an unassailable position. How strangely had adverse circumstances contributed to furnish him with the knowledge and experience of humanity in its various phases which he turned to such excellent account in his writings! At the time of life when a young man reared amid affluent surroundings has done little more than qualify himself at much expense for one of the learned professions, here was this largely self-educated genius gaining for himself a world-wide reputation. What a power of penetrating observation he possessed, and how opportunely had stern necessity forced his talents into activity! "His face," observed Mrs Carlyle, "was as if made of steel." And Leigh Hunt wrote of him, "What a face to meet in a drawing-room; it has the life and soul in it of fifty human beings." A portrait of him, painted by Francis Alexander, when he visited America the first time, and now hanging in the Boston Museum of Fine

Arts, illustrates Mrs Carlyle's meaning, by showing Dickens's keen expression, but it is equally true that his face was wonderfully mobile, as was fully realised by those who saw him on the stage, or who watched him closely during one of his public readings.

Dickens had much dramatic genius; in addition to writing plays he constructed most of his novels with the talent of a dramatist. His characters frequently express themselves with stage-like emphasis, and several of them are provided with a favourite phrase or a quaint manner that clings to them perpetually, helping to create a dramatic atmosphere for the story. Among his successful performances on the stage an impersonation of Captain Bobadil in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour* was specially notable. This play was given by an amateur company in 1845 at the Royalty Theatre in London, and was repeated elsewhere. The artist, Charles Robert Leslie, painted our author in one of the most attractive scenes of this drama.

Concurrently with the power of drawing his characters with stage-like emphasis, Dickens had the talent of making the reader feel at home with them, and almost constituting one of the party. This faculty is of course not uncommon with the leading novelists, but it is in marked contrast to the method occasionally used by Thackeray of chatting to the reader about his characters. In both writers we learn something of the philosophy of life, but with Dickens the writer stands more in the background while the tale unfolds itself. Moreover Dickens was not overflowing with stores of classical and academical learning to be constantly leaking out in quotation and simile, as is the case for example with Carlyle whose references almost require the use of a reader's handbook and a classical dictionary. The men and women of Dickens are drawn from actual life, as seen and intensified by the author, and he thus takes his place as one of the great creators of light

literature, a realist illuminated and elevated by the ideals of romanticism.

Influenced mainly by his environment, Dickens's study of personality would naturally commence at home, where his parents furnished models that for his purpose would have been hard to surpass. The father especially, who served as prototype for Mr Micawber and William Dorrit, must certainly have been, in Steerforth's phrase, "a man to know;" while to his mother, whose traits are reproduced and exaggerated in Mrs Nickleby and Mrs Micawber, he perhaps was as lenient as such a literary artist could well be when working from so tempting a model. There appeared some while ago a clever sketch portrait of John Dickens, showing the type of man he was, and clearly suggesting how naturally Wilkins Micawber and William Dorrit assumed life and form. The father was asked on one occasion where his son had been educated, and replied in his habitual manner, "Well real-

ly, ah ha, it might be said that he had educated himself." London, so long his home, is reflected in all his books. His early experiences in America are reproduced in the travels of Martin Chuzzlewit and Mark Tapley; while his visits to the continent of Europe enabled him to create the background of several scenes in *Little Dorrit* and *A Tale of Two Cities.*

With Dickens's limited learning it was a bold and somewhat risky experiment to write historical novels. The first of these, *Barnaby Rudge,* probably owed its inception to the reading by the author of Scott's *Heart of Midlothian,* and the book is not one of the writer's greatest works. On the other hand the later venture, *A Tale of Two Cities,* was probably inspired by Carlyle's *French Revolution,* and it is wonderfully vivid and successful, though slightly melodramatic.

The outstanding characteristics of our author's writing are kindliness, sympathy with the deserving poor and oppressed, wit, humour, pathos, emphasis often lead-

ing to exaggeration, with occasional ridicule and irony, the last-named almost exclusively employed in his determined crusades against the many abuses that found in his writings so severe an indictment. The novels contain a moderate number of literary allusions; Scott, Burns, Dr Watts, Gay, LeSage, Smollett, and others are quoted, or referred to, or on occasion are used as models. Furthermore, especially in the early writings, topics of the day, many of them quite ephemeral, are drawn upon, a practice causing difficulties to later generations of readers, and in fact only appropriate in sketches themselves of an ephemeral nature.

To the influence of Carlyle may probably be traced some of the views on political and social topics that are developed so forcefully in *Bleak House, Our Mutual Friend, Hard Times,* and *Little Dorrit. Hard Times* was dedicated to Carlyle, and the motive behind the story is so insistently enforced that the book largely fails if

considered mainly as a work of fiction, while it ranks very high in the class of didactic literature. It would be difficult to estimate the full effect of our author's writings in helping forward the social progress of his country, but in subsequent pages we refer to some of the more notable of these achievements. In his last novel, *Edwin Drood,* when his strenuous nature was feeling the exhaustion of age, he adopted another style, and wrote part of a story, the composition of which avoided the nervous tension that must ever attend the writer who is exposing abuses in high places and the evils of his times.

Dickens lived at high pressure all his life. His activities included speeches at public meetings for philanthropic objects, theatrical performances both public and private, when he usually undertook the additional duties of stage manager, and the editorial functions in connection with a magazine. Further he was a prolific letter-writer. Early in December 1844 he arrived from Italy on a flying visit to Lon-

don to see *The Chimes* through the press, and to read the story to a circle of his friends before the actual publication. The scene at Forster's house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, sketched by Maclise, may be regarded as a record of the germ that in later years developed into the famous public readings. Carlyle sat conspicuously near to the reader, his presence being regarded as of prime importance. Dickens had also hoped for Mrs Carlyle's company, as he considered her literary taste fine and discriminating, but the gathering was one of men only. It included, among others, Stanfield and Maclise the painters, Jerrold, Blanchard, Harness, and Dyce, as well as the host, Forster. It is pleasing to note how popular Dickens was with writers of his day and with professional men generally. Among his intimates were Macready, Fechter, Augustus Egg, and Perugini, the last of whom became his son-in-law. During his first visit to America he gained the sincere friendship of Longfellow and Felton, both

of them professors at Harvard, and the latter also for a time President of the University. Others of his friends were Bulwer Lytton, Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins, and Thackeray, though there occurred some short period of estrangement from the author of *Vanity Fair*. Most of the writer's sons received names recalling leading men of letters either then living or of a past age, for example Alfred Tennyson and Henry Fielding. This latter, the youngest son, is now Sir Henry Fielding Dickens; he holds the position of Common Serjeant, a judicial post of importance in London, and is the novelist's last surviving son.

At Gore House and elsewhere Dickens would occasionally mingle in the gaiety of London society; moreover he found a helpful friend in Miss (afterwards Lady) Burdett-Coutts. His biographer was John Forster who had so long remained on intimate terms with him. The volumes were criticised as telling too much about the author, and were by one humorist styled

The Autobiography of John Forster with Occasional Anecdotes of Charles Dickens.

The following verses are taken from Bret Harte's *Dickens in Camp,* descriptive of a reading from *The Old Curiosity Shop* at a camp of gold-miners in California.

The roaring camp-fire, with rude humour painted
The ruddy tints of health
On haggard face and form that drooped and fainted
In the fierce race for wealth;

Till one arose and from his pack's scant treasure
A hoarded volume drew,
And cards were dropped from hands of listless leisure
To hear the tale anew;

And then, while round them shadows gathered faster
And as the fire-light fell,
He read aloud the book wherein the Master
Had writ of *Little Nell.*

II. CHARACTERISTICS

THE keen discernment of Dickens enabled him to accumulate and weave into his stories a vast number of small items of the life and customs of his day, and thus his writings have become quite a storehouse of information that may well prove valuable to antiquarians of future generations. Many such customs indeed have already begun to rank as obsolete. Thus glancing through *Pickwick,* we see that London lawyers used to keep their offices open till eight o'clock, after which hour many of the head clerks would be found in friendly re-union at a neighbouring tavern, showing that they must have lived in the vicinity, whereas to-day at half past five or six they are most of them on the way to homes in the suburbs. Moreover the principals of the firm now reside either at the West End or in suburban districts such as the home district of Mr

Spenlow in *David Copperfield,* and it would be strange to find a Solicitor of these days living in his office building like Mr Tulkinghorn, though a striking exception is furnished by the Inns of Court where there are many residential chambers.

The old system of conducting elections of members to serve in Parliament, portrayed at the imaginary borough of Eatanswill (eat and swill), can now be recalled only by elderly people; how good food with strong drink was free to all voters; how the occasion was made an excuse for rowdyism of every sort; how the candidates with their chief supporters occupied a platform called the hustings, and shouted themselves hoarse in attempting to make their voices heard above the din caused by trumpets, drums, and yells from all sides, while the more turbulent members of the mob were pelting them with rotten eggs, dead cats, and other missiles. The wasteful expenditure involved in such proceedings as well as in direct payment for

votes has been largely curtailed, regulated, and in some respects abolished by the introduction of the ballot, and by other legislation; much-needed reforms probably in a measure helped forward by the publication of *Pickwick*.

The pound or pinfold recalls customs of the past; a small pen or enclosed space where stray animals were "impounded." It may be remembered how Mr Pickwick, left by his friends in a wheelbarrow asleep and inebriated, was removed to the pound by order of the irate owner of the estate where the shooting party had been enjoying a surreptitious lunch, and how the jovial old gentleman was confined for some hours in this public place, in the company of a stray donkey, the undignified object of general mirth and ridicule.

The use of warming-pans, four-post bedsteads, and sedan-chairs, with the employment of link-boys to light pedestrians and the drivers of carriages through the streets at night, are other instances of by-

gone customs mentioned in the pages of our novelist.

The practice of giving to fictitious characters names to indicate their nature and occupation is found in early writings such as Ben Jonson's and Massinger's, and it has been followed by many authors since those days. It was occasionally adopted by Dickens; for instance all readers must remember Mrs Leo Hunter and her guest Count Smorltork, Lord Frederick Verisopht the tool of Sir Mulberry Hawk, Bob Sawyer the young surgeon the successor of Nockemorf, Madame Mantalini who dealt in ladies' mantles, Sir John Chester resembling Lord Chesterfield, and Allan Woodcourt who would court Esther Summerson. Other names probably coined by the novelist are rather suggestive than explanatory, such as Pecksniff, Slammer, Perker, Jingle, Mrs Cluppins, and Elijah Pogram; a certain number are clearly chosen for their whimsical sound, such as Pickwick, Snodgrass, Chuzzlewit, Chuffey,

Chivery, and Guppy; while a few are thinly disguised forms of the actual names of living men, such as the magistrate Fang in *Oliver Twist* for a contemporary London magistrate named Lang, and Justice Stareleigh in *Pickwick* for the real Justice Gaselee. These last two names form a somewhat close and interesting parallel to Massinger's introduction of Sir Giles Overreach into *A New Way to Pay Old Debts* as a copy or caricature of the greedy monopoly-patent holder, Sir Giles Mompesson, a notorious living person of the period.

Following the precedent of certain earlier writers, Dickens in his first books would occasionally make his characters relate long and irrelevant stories that interrupt the narrative in a most inartistic manner, but he wisely discontinued the practice in the works of his maturer years. We can however scarcely regret the introduction into *Nicholas Nickleby* of *The Five Sisters of York,* a legendary tale of especial interest to readers who know the

celebrated window bearing that name in the north transept of York Minster. Visitors to the cathedral admire this Early English window, filled with stained glass apparently copied from designs in tapestry, which by charming simplicity without formality give to that part of the church a warm and furnished effect while avoiding over-ornamentation; and those who remember the legend of the weaving of the patterns will experience a human emotion vitalising the bare record of names and dates associated with the building of the stately edifice.

Dickens had no claim to rank as a learned antiquary, in fact he makes rather contemptuous fun of such studies in describing the proceedings of the Pickwick Club, but what a warm affection he cherished for the grand old buildings to be found in every part of England! Cathedrals, castles, manor-houses, country churches, and picturesque taverns attracted him strongly; and in *Barnaby Rudge* he introduces a quaint old hostelry

at Chigwell near to Epping Forest that possessed a special fascination for him.

Although an emphatic and picturesque writer, Dickens may yet be termed a restrained and conventional one, for he was inclined to follow the generally accepted models in his composition, and would very rarely invent a word to fit the occasion, in that respect forming a strong contrast to his friend Carlyle who initiated many words and forms of expression. However in the preface to *Barnaby Rudge* we find our author describing himself as "ravenless," meaning "without a raven," a short and neat term with a literary flavour. The title *Our Mutual Friend* was criticised by the purists of the day who maintained that *Our Common Friend* was the only correct phrase. It may be claimed however that "common" is a word with such various meanings that the employment of it causes ambiguity, and that the language contains no alternative word in case the use of "mutual" in that sense should be excluded; moreover

the phrase supported by Dickens's authority is now gaining the sanction of general usage. The combination of blank verse with prose in the account of the burial of Little Nell in *The Old Curiosity Shop* was also a subject of criticism; but the few lines in question spring so naturally and spontaneously from the writer, and fit so appropriately the emotions evoked in the reader's breast that the result is supremely excellent.

The early association of Dickens with the debtors' prison where his father was confined, made an indelible impression on his mind, that is found reflected in his books. Hence may be traced his sympathetic regard for the poor and unfortunate that so largely contributed to his popularity. His increasing reputation did not crowd out or abate these kindly feelings, but he employed his accession of influence as an enlarged opportunity for advocating the cause of the suffering and oppressed; and it was his habit to pay visits to prisons and institutions of vari-

ous kinds both at home and abroad. While in Boston in 1842 he was introduced to Dr Samuel Gridley Howe, and inspected the Institution for the Blind where that benevolent physician was able to accomplish such admirable results. In the *American Notes* is a full description of the interesting case of Laura Bridgman, the blind and deaf mute, who was educated by a system devised by Dr. Howe with marvellous patience and ingenuity; and the same volume contains accounts of the novelist's visits to other institutions in the course of his travels.

When Dickens toured America he was of course a literary star of the first magnitude, and there was a general desire to see him and shake him by the hand. This led to a droll episode during his few days in Philadelphia. Looking from the hotel window while at breakfast he observed a crowd in the street below, and his attention was drawn to a newspaper paragraph to the effect that Mr Dickens would receive his friends at a certain hour that

morning. An officious acquaintance admitted he had taken the liberty of sending the notice to the paper, whereat the novelist expressed much indignation, but finally submitted to the ordeal of an excessive display of friendship to prevent the disappointment that would have otherwise ensued. This somewhat unpleasant experience was kept out of the *American Notes,* but it was reproduced in humorous fashion in *Martin Chuzzlewit.* The description in that novel of the dismal City of Eden reflects in exaggerated style the writer's impressions of Cairo, a small town at the junction of the Ohio with the Mississippi. The considerable river traffic of those years had naturally suggested that the place was an ideal spot to plant a town, and that early purchasers of real estate would quickly gain large profits. Several English people, and apparently Dickens among them, had speculated on these chances, but conditions were not nearly so favourable as the promoters had represented; the site was liable to periodic

floods, and it was surrounded by malarial swamps. Consequently progress was slow, and even ten years after the novelist's visit, Cairo as shown in published views bore all the signs of a settlement at the frontier of civilization, so that Martin Chuzzlewit's decision to leave Eden and sacrifice the money he had paid for a plot of land, reflected the author's sapient doubts of any early prospect of progress at Cairo.

Dickens was a sufferer from the absence of international copyright in his day. His books were all reprinted in America, but very little remuneration reached the writer. When first visiting the new country most of his speeches were in part employed in advocating an international agreement for copyright; but he gained small public approval. The leading men of letters would tell him privately that they agreed entirely with his views, but not one of them would support him publicly; they all seemed afraid of the newspapers, where piracy of English books was

deemed good business. Hence in *Martin Chuzzlewit* appeared the amusing satire on the *New York Rowdy Journal.* American publishers were not the only offenders in this matter, but they had a wider field for exploitation than British publishers. The old selfish policy proved equally injurious to American authors, who both suffered piracy at the hands of English publishers and also found it difficult to get their new books issued at home, as so many American publishers were occupied in the more profitable trade of pirating Dickens and other English authors, unrestrained by scruples of conscience or by force of law.

From time to time Dickens has received much of the sincerest form of flattery that is said to lie in imitation. Without entering deeply into the subject, it may be observed that a high literary authority has traced Thackeray's Major Pendennis to Dickens's Major Bagstock, and has suggested that the Captain Costigan of Thackeray may have originated from the

Mr Snevellicci of *Nicholas Nickleby,* and that the Pyke and Pluck of the same novel probably served as prototypes for Thackeray's Wenham and Wagg. On the other hand Mr Mell, the assistant of David Copperfield's schoolmaster Creakle, was clearly suggested by traditions of Oliver Goldsmith, who as a young man had been usher at a school at Peckham, a London suburban district. Goldsmith was somewhat careless in dress, used to play the flute, and on a certain occasion was sneered at by one of the boys for referring to himself as a gentleman. These details appear in Forster's *Life of Goldsmith,* dedicated to his friend Dickens and published in 1848, a year before the writing of *Copperfield;* the description of Mr Mell reproduces them all.

Most readers, if asked which of our author's works they liked best, would answer *David Copperfield,* and Dickens himself admitted that it was his own favourite. Two literary contemporaries were warm in their praises of this book.

Thackeray, writing of the English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century, says, "I think of these past writers and of one who lives amongst us now, and am grateful for the innocent laughter and the sweet and unsullied page which the author of *David Copperfield* gives to my children." And Matthew Arnold writes, (*Nineteenth Century,* June 1881), "Much as I have published, I do not think it has ever happened to me before to comment in print upon any production of Charles Dickens. What a pleasure to have the opportunity of praising a work so rich in merits as *David Copperfield!* . . . What treasures of gaiety, invention, life, are in that book! What alertness and resource! What a soul of good-nature and kindness governing the whole!"

III. SOME LOCALITIES

IN the County of York, secluded from the main routes of present-day traffic, but easily accessible, stands the hamlet of Greta Bridge, once the site of a Roman camp. The River Tees flowing eastward divides Yorkshire from Durham, and the Greta is a small river or tributary stream joining the Tees from the south or Yorkshire side. The old highway dating from Roman times runs through the district in a north-westerly direction towards Carlisle and Scotland, and crosses the smaller river at this place, where in the days of stage-coaches travellers used to be welcomed at a comfortable inn. Readers of Dickens know that this was the locality of Dotheboys Hall. Bowes, a small town of Roman origin, was the chief centre where such schools flourished surprisingly. The novelist, in his enthusiastic crusades against abuses of various kinds, had long

cherished the project of exposing in print these vicious Yorkshire schoolmasters. His intention began to take practical shape in the early part of February 1838, when, together with his illustrator Hablot Knight Browne, he spent two or three days in the district. The pair arrived from the south at Greta Bridge after a cold day's coach-ride, and on the following morning sat down to a breakfast at the inn, comprising, as Dickens wrote to his wife, "toast, cakes, a Yorkshire pie, a piece of beef about the size and much the shape of my portmanteau, tea, coffee, ham and eggs." The novelist carried with him a letter written by a friend in London to a local professional man, asking advice in placing at school an imaginary son of a widowed mother. Dickens tells how the recipient of the letter was for a long time very guarded in his remarks, but finally entreated him to persuade the lady not to send her son to any such school. Moreover at Barnard Castle was a clockmaker named Humphrey, who contracted to keep

in order most of the clocks at Bowes, whom Dickens induced to visit two or three of the schools without delay, himself gaining admission to the houses in the character of Humphrey's assistant. Thus was gathered first-hand inside information that produced such a telling effect in *Nicholas Nickleby*. The name of the clockmaker was used in a later publication, *Master Humphrey's Clock*.

A schoolmaster at Bowes named Shaw is believed to have been the prototype of Squeers, but the author claimed to have described a class rather than an individual. At the time it was currently reported of several local pedagogues that each thought himself the unholy original. Dickens plainly seems to have had one of Shaw's business cards before him when writing the third chapter of *Nicholas Nickleby*. The advertisement in the London newspaper produced by Mr Ralph Nickleby ran as follows: "At Mr Wackford Squeers's Academy, Dotheboys Hall, at the delightful village of Dotheboys,

near Greta Bridge in Yorkshire — Youth are boarded, clothed, booked, furnished with pocket-money, provided with all necessaries, instructed in all languages, living and dead, mathematics, orthography, geometry, astronomy, trigonometry, the use of the globes, algebra, singlestick (if required), writing, arithmetic, fortification, and every other branch of classical literature. Terms twenty guineas per annum. No extras, no vacations, and diet unparalleled. Mr Squeers is in town and attends daily from one till four at the Saracen's Head, Snow Hill. N.B. An able assistant wanted. Annual salary £5. A Master of Arts would be preferred."

Despite the absurdity of all this, it forms an obvious and reasonable parody of a professional card actually used by Shaw. On this card the public are informed that—"At Bowes Academy near Greta Bridge, Yorkshire, Youth are carefully instructed in the English, Latin, and Greek languages, Writing, Common and Decimal Arithmetic, Book-Keeping, Men-

suration, Surveying, Geometry, Geography, and Navigation, with the most useful branches of the Mathematics, and are provided with Board, Clothes and every necessary at Twenty Guineas per annum each. No vacations except by the Parents' desire. N.B. The French Language Two Guineas per annum extra. Mr Shaw attends at the George and Blue Boar, High Holborn, the three first weeks in the months of January and July."

In October 1823 Shaw was defendant in two actions in the Court of Common Pleas: "Jones v. Shaw" and "Ocherby v. Shaw," the plaintiff in each case being the father of a boy at the school suing for compensation for injury to the health of his son caused by bad food, filthy conditions of living, and ill-treatment. The evidence adduced at the trials disclosed a horrible state of affairs that had produced serious diseases, including ophthalmia and loss of sight; and in the result a verdict for the plaintiff with £300 damages was returned in each case. There is no doubt that news-

paper reports of these trials had reached the ears of the youthful Dickens, for in a preface to the novel he tells of having heard of these evil schools in his early years.

Close to Greta Bridge is Rokeby Park, an estate occupied early in the last century by Sir Walter Scott's friend Morritt; and the great romantic writer made the district the scene of his poem *Rokeby*. Scott sold the copyright for £3000, the largest sum paid up to that time for a single poem, though shortly afterwards an equal amount was received by Moore for *Lalla Rookh*.

At the same period Thomas Dunham Whitaker wrote his *History of Richmondshire,* a local name for that part of the County of York. The artist Turner was employed to make drawings for illustrating the book. The artist's work was performed in his early and minutely careful manner, and the excellent engravings add greatly to the value of the stately volumes. Specially fine are the *Junction of the*

Greta and Tees at Rokeby, the *Brignall Church,* and *Wycliffe.* Another well-known artist was painting in the same district about that time, John Sell Cotman, one of the Norwich School. His *Greta Bridge* is executed in the broad free style of John Crome the leader of that school, who was familiarly known as Old Crome.

When Nicholas Nickleby and Smike joined Mr Vincent Crummles's theatrical company after their pedestrian journey from London to Portsmouth, they had reached Dickens's native place, and the author was on familiar ground. In *Pickwick* he sends the four friends on their travels to some towns that he himself had visited when reporting political speeches for the newspapers. Among such places Bury St Edmunds in the Eastern Counties district is a town of remote antiquity, in by-gone years dominated by a flourishing monastery, some ruins of which may still be seen. Carlyle in his *Past and Present* relates in his vivid style the outlines of the life of one of the most noted of the

abbots, who took a leading part in the affairs of his time, and left a great reputation. Of other provincial centres to which the Pickwickians journeyed, Bath is in some ways the most interesting. Its fame may be traced mainly to the natural features of the site; placed in a hollow surrounded by high hills, it lies sheltered from tempestuous gales, and forms a basin where plentiful springs of pure water abound. The Roman relics include large stone baths, that remained covered with soil and debris for several centuries, but are now carefully preserved for their antiquarian interest. The city had a period of much prosperity in the eighteenth century, being a pleasure resort for fashionable society, and a sheltered retreat for persons of advanced years and declining health. For a time it enjoyed also a literary reputation of a transient character, as the temporary abode of Sheridan, William Beckford, Walter Savage Landor, Mrs Piozzi, Miss Burney, and others.

When Dickens visited Yarmouth to gather material for *David Copperfield*, the name of the neighbouring village of Blundeston captivated his fancy, and he made it the birthplace of his hero, altering it to "Blunderstone." It was between this village and Yarmouth that the carrier Barkis plied his trade. "Eton Slocomb" in *Nicholas Nickleby*, the place on the Great North Road where the coach stopped for passengers to dine, is a humorous variant from the actual Eaton Socon. Rugby, an important railway station in the midlands, receives the name of "Mugby Junction" in one of the short pieces.

Most of the buildings and localities in the London district appear in the novels with their own proper names. Furnival's Inn, High Holborn, one of the lesser Inns of Court, where Dickens rented chambers in his early manhood, has been demolished, and its place is occupied by a large insurance office. Staple Inn across the way, associated with Mr Grewgious in *Edwin Drood,* still stands as of old. Kingsgate

Street in the same vicinity, where Mrs Gamp lived, was swept away to open out space for the broad new thoroughfare Kingsway. In *Little Dorrit* Mr Casby's residence was probably in Ampton Street, Grays Inn Road, a cul-de-sac in those years corresponding with the description in the novel. Here Carlyle had lodged for a while before making his home in London.

Lawyers' offices abound in Chancery Lane, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and Bedford Row, known familiarly in the profession as the Lane, the Fields, and the Row. Mr Guppy in *Bleak House* refers to "Mr Tulkinghorn of the Fields," whose house is identified with that of the author's friend John Forster. The placing of the office and residence of Ralph Nickleby, the money-lender and company-promoter, in Golden Square is very appropriate. While near to the West End, it lies so conveniently secluded from the streams of traffic, that the careless man of good family, temporarily short of ready cash, might safely call in Golden Square without meet-

ing any of his intimates. The Golden Cross Hotel at Charing Cross in Dickens's early years was not the building of that name in the same locality to-day. At the old hotel David Copperfield met Steerforth after seeing *Julius Caesar* at Covent Garden Theatre; and it is told that on the following morning he looked from his window at the equestrian statue of Charles I. The ancient hostelry, which was taken down for the purpose of widening the Strand and forming Trafalgar Square, occupied a site fronting Whitehall and the statue facing down the street towards the spot where the unfortunate king met his fate, whereas the modern house does not command the same view.

Near to the south end of London Bridge is Lant Street where Bob Sawyer and Ben Allen had their rooms during their student years at Guy's Hospital. This dreary street was very familiar to Dickens, for here he had lodged while his father was confined in the neighbouring Marshalsea Prison. Not far away stands St George's

Church, Southwark, where Arthur Clennam and Amy Dorrit were married. So real has the story become that the verger is prepared to show interested visitors the exact spot in the vestry where Little Dorrit and Maggy must have slept on the night they were shut out of the prison.

Of importance secondary only to the Tower of London, Newgate Prison, the scene of rioting in *Barnaby Rudge,* long stood as a menace to the evil-doers of the metropolis. The site is now occupied by the Central Criminal Court, familiarly known as the new Old Bailey. The same novel tells of the burning by the mob of Lord Mansfield's fine residence at Caen Wood between Hampstead and Highgate. The house was afterwards rebuilt, and together with the surrounding estate it today forms one of the many public parks of greater London. When Dickens occupied a house in town he would frequently take a long walk up to Hampstead Heath, and return by way of Caen Wood and Highgate. The home of Mrs Steerforth was

one of the "genteel old-fashioned" houses on the top of Highgate Hill. From the windows of his bedroom David Copperfield "saw all London lying in the distance like a great vapour with here and there lights twinkling through it." Here also in his latter years lived Coleridge in the house of Dr Gillman; and the same view over London is described by Carlyle with much vividness in his *Life of John Sterling*. If one of these authors was indebted to the other for the idea of describing this view, the debt must have been due to Dickens, for *Copperfield* was written before *Sterling*; but probably Carlyle drew on his memory, for he had himself some years before visited Coleridge at Highgate.

If out for a longer walk Dickens would cross the Thames by Putney Bridge, and traverse Putney Heath on his way round by Richmond or Twickenham Ferry, a district renowned in song and story. At Twickenham he placed the home of Mr and Mrs Meagles; and hither came their

friends Arthur Clennam and Daniel Doyce for a week-end visit by the road described. At Petersham in this locality Dickens settled in the summer of 1839 for a few months, but he would frequently spend a day in London.

In the *Pictures from Italy* Dickens produced an interesting book of travel, wisely avoiding topics beyond his compass, and enlivening his descriptions with occasional humor. At Milan he gazed upon the great "Leonardo," and says, "In the old refectory of the dilapidated Convent of Santa Maria delle Grazie, is the work of art, perhaps better known than any other in the world: the Last Supper, by Leonardo da Vinci — with a door cut through it by the intelligent Dominican friars, to facilitate their operations at dinner time. . . I would simply observe, that in its beautiful composition and arrangement, there it is, at Milan, a wonderful picture; and that, in its original colouring, or in its original expression of any single face or feature, there it is not. Apart from the

damage it has sustained from damp, decay, and neglect, it has been (as Barry shows) so retouched upon, and repainted, and that so clumsily, that many of the heads are, now, positive deformities, with patches of paint and plaster sticking upon them like wens, and utterly distorting the expression. Where the original artist set the impress of his genius on a face, which, almost in a line or touch, separated him from meaner painters and made him what he was, succeeding bunglers, filling up, or painting across seams and cracks, have been quite unable to imitate his hand; and putting in some scowls, or frowns, or wrinkles, of their own, have blotched and spoiled the work."

IV. BLEAK HOUSE

IT is probable that *Bleak House* furnishes a more typical and satisfactory instance of "a novel with a purpose" than any other book that could be readily named. Of various abuses of his time that came under the lash of our author's whip, the most notable for its massiveness, and for its firm entrenchment behind privilege and interest was that remarkable judicial institution, the old Court of Chancery.

The subject is vividly introduced to the reader at the very commencement of the story, and is thus attacked by the author: "London. Michaelmas Term lately over, and the Lord Chancellor sitting in Lincoln's Inn Hall. Implacable November weather. As much mud in the streets, as if the waters had but newly retired from the face of the earth, and it would not be wonderful to meet a Megalosaurus, forty feet long or so, waddling like an elephan-

tine lizard up Holborn Hill. . . . Fog everywhere. Fog up the river, where it flows among green aits and meadows; fog down the river, where it rolls defiled among the tiers of shipping, and the water-side pollutions of a great (and dirty) city. Fog on the Essex marshes, fog on the Kentish heights. . . . Chance people on the bridges peeping over the parapets into a nether sky of fog, with fog all around them. . . . Gas looming through the fog in divers places in the streets. . . . The raw afternoon is rawest, and the dense fog is densest, and the muddy streets are muddiest, near that leaden-headed old obstruction, appropriate ornament for the threshold of a leaden-headed old corporation: Temple Bar. And hard by Temple Bar, at the very heart of the fog sits the Lord High Chancellor in his High Court of Chancery. Never can there come fog too thick, never can there come mud and mire too deep, to assort with the groping and floundering condition which this High Court of Chancery,

most pestilent of hoary sinners, holds, this day, in the sight of heaven and earth." In the preface the author tells that, having heard from a Chancery judge how all the defects in procedure were due to the parsimony of the public in declining to increase the number of judges, he decided to let the public learn something of the real facts, and enable them to see that other reforms were sorely needed.

Bleak House is one of the most closely knit of Dickens's stories, and the plot is skilfully interwoven with the main purpose of the novel, the various threads and chief episodes uniting to lead up to the final dénouement. Critics have from time to time been busy with the book. One fault pointed out has been its gloominess. The sombre features certainly outweigh the bright incidents, but evidently this forms part of the author's method of producing a strong impression of the deplorable results arising from the defects of the institution in question. Instances of the evil consequences of being involved in

Chancery proceedings occur in the suicide of Tom Jarndyce, the mental and physical deterioration and early death of Gridley and likewise of Richard Carstone, and the insanity of Miss Flyte.

The number and variety of deaths described or referred to in the course of the tale, met some years ago with the disapproval of John Ruskin in a magazine article entitled *Fiction, Fair and Foul.* Scott's novels were placed in the one category, while *Bleak House*, mainly on account of its many deaths, was singled out as typical of the other class of literature. It is perhaps only fair to Ruskin's memory to assume that when he wrote this partial and one-sided estimate of *Bleak House,* he must have been suffering from mental weakness. Otherwise one would have supposed that the pathetic account of the poor boy Jo, an example of the lower ranks of life neglected or selfishly exploited by the rich, would have reconciled Ruskin to the book, for there is in the description of Jo and his surroundings much that is reminis-

cent of the teachings of Thomas Carlyle, whose writings on social questions attracted Ruskin so strongly. Winding up his dramatic account of Jo's death, Dickens uses the manner of Carlyle: "The light is come upon the dark benighted way. Dead! Dead, your majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, right reverends and wrong reverends of every order. Dead, men and women, born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day."

In the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* Carlyle sneers at the type of British politician represented by the Honorable Felix Parvulus and the Right Honorable Felicissimus Zero. Dickens declared of Carlyle that he was one whom he would "go at all times further to see than any man alive;" and in the chapters of *Bleak House* where reference is made to party politics, we are told of the prominent political leaders — William Buffy, Lord Coodle, Sir Thomas Doodle, and the Duke of Foodle.

Dickens was wont to introduce minor characters to provide amusing incidents in the nature of side-shows. In *Bleak House* Mr and Mrs Bayham Badger serve this purpose; the history of Mrs Badger's former husbands is an episode unconnected with the thread of the story, relieving by its lightness the pervading solemnity. Incidentally this scene serves for the introduction of Allan Woodcourt to Esther Summerson. Bayham Street, Camden Town, provided a home for the Dickens family in the author's boyhood.

Other characters that brighten the narrative are Mr Chadband, Mr Turveydrop, Mrs Jellyby, and Mrs Pardiggle. These two ladies present the appearance of having been dragged into the story for an extraneous purpose. Dickens was a warm-hearted philanthropist of the old-fashioned sort, and his willingness to aid the distressed must have rendered him an obvious target for the begging epistles of many busy women of the Jellyby and Pardiggle type. His grievance against Mrs

Jellyby is that she neglects her plain domestic duties, and gives her time and energy to extraneous projects of very doubtful utility. In his scathing description of the family conditions, the writer seems to be rebuking his tiresome correspondents.

A striking achievement of Charles Dickens is the creation of characters that have become almost household words, and reference to whom is of frequent occurrence in modern literature. One of these conspicuous personalities is the sanctimonious hypocrite, Mr Chadband. Occasionally we find the reproduction with variations in a later book of a type of character portrayed in an earlier novel. Thus the elder Turveydrop appears to resemble in many characteristics Mr Mantalini in *Nicholas Nickleby*. Perhaps it may be inferred that one actual prototype served for the two sketches, and that when about to write *Bleak House*, the author felt that in Mantalini he had not fully exhausted the latent possibilities of the original.

It will probably be generally admitted

that the masterpiece among the various creations is Mr Guppy; he is so sublimely and unconsciously amusing, with such an infinite and wholly innocent notion of his own importance. Mr Guppy in charge of the office during the long vacation is excellent. The author took wonderfully complete stock of a lawyer's office during his short connection with the profession; but it is not quite correct to assign to Inspector Bucket of the detective force the duty of requiring Jo to "move on." A notable instance of how far the author's fondness for exaggeration will lead him, is afforded by love-lorn Mr Guppy attending the performance at every theatre where Esther and her party happen to be present. How the devoted young man could have learned to which particular play-house the friends intended to go one evening after another is an unsolved mystery, and the law of probabilities excludes the suggestion of chance.

The oft-repeated complaint that Dickens could not draw a gentleman, receives

a partial refutation in the presentation of John Jarndyce, though admittedly he may be considered too good to be true. His tender feelings, kind actions, and ultra-gentlemanliness are almost beyond the probable, and sometimes tinged with quixotism. On the other hand Sir Leicester Dedlock is consistent and wholly probable. Though not an ideal portrait, yet it seems so certain that a man living Sir Leicester's life, would speak and act in his manner, that he must be regarded as a very successful characterisation.

Rockingham Castle has been regarded by many as the prototype of Chesney Wold. Crowning an elevation, it commands an extensive view of the vale traversed by the Welland, a stream that frequently floods the adjacent meadows. The large estate was in the occupation of several generations of the Watson family, many of them commemorated by monuments in the village church. The Honorable Mrs Watson was a friend of Dickens, and is said in some measure to have sug-

gested the personality of Lady Dedlock. A commodious old house at St Albans is supposed to have been the original of Mr Jarndyce's residence.

The novel contains two characters founded on persons living at the time, Harold Skimpole and Lawrence Boythorn, who represented Leigh Hunt and Walter Savage Landor. In 1840 Dickens and his wife with Forster and Maclise had visited Bath, where Forster took the opportunity of making Dickens known to Landor, who was then one of the residents. The literary veteran proved very attractive to the novelist, and consequently the latter's second son, who was born in the following year, received the names of Walter Landor. When Dickens's new friend shortly afterwards read *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and was told that the character of Little Nell had first been conceived in his rooms at Bath, his admiration for the book occasioned one of his characteristic outbursts of hyperbole, and he exclaimed that he wished he could buy that house and burn

it to the ground, that the building might never be desecrated by anything meaner than the memory of Little Nell. Many of Boythorn's utterances are of a similarly exaggerated nature, and the prototype is used quite artistically in *Bleak House.* The same can hardly be said regarding Skimpole and Leigh Hunt. It was unfortunate when the likeness had in the earlier part of the book been so close as to have been generally recognised, that the character should have been allowed to develop so unpleasantly; but this matter is amplified in our next chapter.

The foundation of the plot is the secret of Esther's birth, and the progress is largely concerned with Mr Tulkinghorn's strange persecution of Lady Dedlock. This provides the opportunity for some masterly scenes, and yet the lawyer's motive receives no adequate explanation. The solving of the minor mystery of the murder is followed by a sort of anti-climax.

In *Pickwick* Hablot Browne had a thoroughly congenial field for the exercise of

his art, and he never excelled his work in that book; but *Bleak House* shows that his hand had not lost its cunning, and that his fund of humor was not exhausted. Mr and Mrs Bayham Badger are perfect; Guppy, Chadband, and Turveydrop very successful, while Skimpole is drawn to be, in Dickens's words and doubtless to his satisfaction, "singularly unlike the great original." Humorous touches are introduced among the statues in the church at Chesney Wold, and in Captain Swosser's portrait in Mrs Bayham Badger's reception-room.

Gridley's case, according to the preface, was based on actual facts, and it is well known that Dickens used a pamphlet issued in 1849 by a solicitor named William Challinor, with the title *The Court of Chancery: Its Inherent Defects.* A few years ago a writer in the Literary Supplement of *The Times* claimed to have identified the case referred to by Challinor and accepted on his authority by Dickens, and reproduced in the novel as Gridley's

case. This writer showed that the real case, known as Cook v. Fynney 1844 c. 59, actually differed in some important particulars from the novelist's account of it, and that the apparent hardship was due rather to an unwise provision in the Will than to an anomalous condition of the law. Dickens had doubtless relied on the report of the case as furnished by Challinor, which by a misunderstanding appears to have been somewhat inaccurate.

The small error thus pointed out is a trifling matter when contrasted with the great work in which Charles Dickens can be said to have borne no insignificant part, the popular agitation that led, some years later, to a far-reaching series of alterations and improvements in the procedure of the Court of Chancery. Thus the eminent writer may be regarded as a useful reformer of our laws while primarily filling his rôle as a public entertainer.

V. DICKENS AND LEIGH HUNT

AMONG Dickens's early friends Leigh Hunt may be said to have occupied a prominent place. It is probable that the marked contrast between the two men was a main cause of their affinity. Dickens certainly possessed some qualities in which Hunt was strikingly deficient. The younger man ripened early, and quickly leaping into fame and fortune maintained his place in public esteem all his life, gaining very considerable and tangible rewards for his exertions. The elder man on the contrary, while a patient literary worker of the second rank, remained much of a dreamer all his days, and suffered privation attributable in some degree to his lack of worldly wisdom. The friend of Byron, Shelley, Charles Lamb, and Carlyle, Hunt was a charming companion, delighting in cultured society, and never permitting the troubles of existence to

diminish or cloud his inherent optimism. His unsophisticated nature and sanguine temperament would make a forceful appeal to Dickens, who would doubtless perceive in the light-hearted conversation and manner a type of character containing great possibilities for the novelist's purpose. Dickens, if prone to smile at the childlike simplicity of Hunt, did so in the kindliest manner, and cherished for him the warmest friendship. To take a single instance: we learn from one of his letters that in the year 1839 he gave a small dinner to three of his inner circle of intimates, Hunt, Forster, and Ainsworth.

The introduction into works of fiction, under thin disguises, of characters drawn from living persons is attended with serious risk, especially when the writer and his model are moving in the same social circles. When Dickens decided, with Leigh Hunt in his mind, to create Harold Skimpole he clearly took that risk. There is much interest in tracing fictitious characters to living originals. An author

can copy an obscure model without danger, but when the original happens to be widely known, and the resemblance is close, the danger of identification becomes greater, and trouble may ensue, particularly if the character should develop unpleasantly.

Dickens may have thought the disguise would not be so readily penetrated as proved to be the case. He had given Skimpole his friend's lightsome manner and mode of speech, but he had described him as an idler and as lacking in firm principle, and finally in common honesty. Skimpole claims to be perfectly unversed in business, in figures, and monetary concerns; and as Hunt suffered from the same constitutional defect, his friends readily recognised the likeness. While the callousness of Skimpole in the progress of the story, was expediting his downward course, the likeness to Hunt was sensibly diminishing, and Dickens may have supposed this divergence sufficient to disarm criticism, but Hunt's family and some of their immediate friends were unap-

peased, perhaps indeed feeling that the humorous exaggeration increased the writer's unfairness. Moreover their sensibilities may have been hurt by observing that the companion portrait in *Bleak House,* of Lawrence Boythorn reproducing Walter Savage Landor, depicts an estimable and thoroughly good-natured, if somewhat eccentric, character, thus displaying a marked contrast between the two sketches.

Dickens in fact admitted the impeachment, and a few months after Hunt's death published his excuses in a number of *All the Year Round.* Shortly before the appearance of this article, Hunt's son had re-issued his father's autobiography, and had added an introductory chapter, in which he described his father, placing his subject, with due filial piety, in the most amiable perspective. In the course of the eulogy he refers to his parent's "sort of gay and ostentatious wilfulness;" and this phrase is quoted by Dickens, who continues: "Exactly those graces and charms

of manner which are remembered in the words we have quoted, were remembered by the author of the work of fiction in question [*Bleak House*] when he drew the character in question [*Harold Skimpole*]. Above all other things, that 'sort of gay and ostentatious wilfulness' in the humouring of a subject which had many a time delighted him, and impressed him as being unspeakably whimsical and attractive, was the airy quality he wanted for the man he invented. Partly for this reason, and partly (he has since often grieved to think) for the pleasure it afforded him to find that delightful manner reproducing itself under his hand, he yielded to the temptation of too often making the character speak like his old friend."

Alexander Ireland says, "Leigh Hunt takes high rank as an essayist and critic. The spirit of his writings is eminently cheerful and humanising. He is perhaps the best teacher in our literature of the contentment which flows from a recognition of everyday joys and blessings. A

belief in all that is good, and beautiful, and in the ultimate success of every true and honest endeavour, and a tender consideration for every mistake and circumstance, are the pervading spirit of all his writings. . . . He knew much suffering, physical and mental, and experienced many cares and sorrows; but his cheerful courage, imperturbable sweetness of temper, and unfailing love and power of forgiveness never deserted him."

It is not at all surprising that the personality and writings of Leigh Hunt should have found great favour with Americans. He enjoyed the friendship of Hawthorne and Emerson, and at the present time there are many men of culture numbered among his warmest admirers.

Carlyle, moving from Scotland to London, settled at Chelsea near to the home of Leigh Hunt. The great man's journal has this entry: "Hunt's household in Cheyne Row, Chelsea. Nondescript! unutterable! Mrs Hunt asleep on cushions; four or five beautiful, strange, gipsy-look-

ing children running about in undress, whom the lady ordered to get us tea. The eldest boy, Percy, a sallow black-haired youth of sixteen with a kind of dark cotton nightgown on, went whirling about like a familiar, providing everything: an indescribable, dreamlike household." Again, in writing to his brother Alexander, he says, "Hunt and the Hunts, as you have heard, live only in the next street from us. . . . He is an airy, crotchety, most copious, clever talker, with an honest undercurrent of reason too, but unfortunately not of the deepest, nor most practical — or rather it is the most unpractical ever man dealt in. . . . He never laughs — can only titter. . . . His house excels all you have ever read of — a poetical tinkerdom, without parallel even in literature. In his family room, where are a sickly large wife and a whole shoal of well-conditioned wild children, you will find half a dozen old rickety chairs gathered from half a dozen different hucksters, and all seemingly engaged, and just pausing,

in a violent hornpipe. On these and around them and on the dusty table and ragged carpet lie all kinds of litter — books, papers, egg-shells, scissors, and last night when I was there the torn heart of a half-quartern loaf."

Mrs Carlyle in writing to her mother-in-law, says of Mrs Hunt, "She is every other day reduced to borrow my tumblers, my tea cups; even a cup of porridge, a few spoonfuls of tea are begged of me, because 'Missus has got company, and happens to be out of the article'; in plain unadorned English, because 'Missus' is the most wretched of managers, and is often at the point of not having a copper in her purse."

Turning to *Bleak House,* Mr Skimpole, on introducing his daughters to Mr Jarndyce's party, says, "This is my Beauty daughter, Arethusa; plays and sings odds and ends like her father. This is my Sentiment daughter, Laura; plays a little but don't sing. This is my Comedy daughter, Kitty; sings a little but don't play. We

all draw a little, and compose a little, and none of us have any idea of time or money. . . . We can't cook anything whatever. A needle and thread we don't know how to use. We admire the people who possess the practical wisdom we want; but we don't quarrel with them.''

Leigh Hunt was of a delicate constitution, and his wife also suffered constant ill-health, as well as being an improvident housekeeper, so that despite Hunt's literary output the family were frequently in financial difficulties. In 1847 affairs reached a crisis, but kind friends combined to render effective assistance. Dickens organised a company of amateurs who gave performances of Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour*. He took a leading part in the play himself, and a sum of £900 was cleared for Hunt. Carlyle undertook to prepare a petition to the prime minister, and obtained such influential support, that a government pension was granted to Hunt for his life. Three years later appeared Hunt's *Autobiogra-*

phy, a most entertaining work, regarded by Carlyle as second only in interest to Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. Shortly afterwards *Bleak House* was written, and the author describes Skimpole as having at his death left a manuscript autobiography ready for publication.

An illustration of Leigh Hunt's somewhat fantastic nature is afforded by his sojourn in prison in 1813 for a libel on the Prince Regent. He deliberately chose imprisonment in preference to giving an undertaking not to repeat the offence. He was lodged in an apartment specially decorated to suit his taste, the wall-paper bright with garlands of roses, and the ceiling painted in cerulean blue. A piano and a number of books were provided for his use, and he regularly received members of his family and friends. Charles Lamb declared that no other such room existed except in a fairy-tale.

Another incident in Hunt's life indicates his cheerful nature and somewhat irresponsible outlook on the world. In the

year 1822 he had travelled with his family to Italy, at the invitation of Byron and Shelley, to assist them in a literary publication. Shelley met the party at Leghorn, and accompanied them to Pisa, where they occupied rooms in Byron's house. Shelley on leaving them, took boat with a friend at Leghorn for Spezzia. The vessel was wrecked in a terrific storm with the loss of all lives. Shelley's body came ashore at Via Reggio where it was temporarily buried in the sand. A few weeks later it was exhumed and cremated on the shore, and Hunt thus describes the process: "Among the materials for burning, as many of the gracefuller and more classical articles as could be procured — frankincense, wine, etc., were not forgotten. The beauty of the flame arising from the funeral pile was extraordinary. The weather was beautifully fine. The Mediterranean, now soft and lucid, kissed the shore as if to make peace with it. The yellow sand and the blue sky were intensely contrasted with one another: marble mountains

touched the air with coolness: and the flame of the fire bore away towards heaven in vigorous amplitude, waving and quivering with a brightness of inconceivable beauty. It seemed as though it contained the glassy essence of vitality. You might have expected a seraphic countenance to look out of it, turning once more before it departed, to thank the friends that had done their duty."

In *Bleak House* Mr Jarndyce introduces Harold Skimpole to his guests after informing them that he possesses much of the nature of a child. A curious child-like trait of Leigh Hunt is thus described by his son: "When he first became acquainted with a new friend whom he liked, he noticed with all his vivacity of ready and intense admiration the traits which he thought to be chiefly in the aspect and bearing of the other, constructed a character inferentially, and esteemed his friend accordingly. The constructive appreciation would survive the test of years. Then he would discover that in regard to

some quality or other which he had ascribed to his friend, he was mistaken; the whole conception of the admired character at once fell to the ground, and his own disappointment recoiled with bitterness and grief on the perplexed and grieved friend. He never knew the pain he thus caused to some of the most loving hearts, which continued unchanged to him."

If Dickens's sketch was at all unkind to his friend, Leigh Hunt had previously meted out even worse measure to Lord Byron, unveiled by any cover of fiction. Byron's somewhat hasty temper must have been sorely tried by Leigh Hunt's demands upon his purse, for when his lordship had invited Hunt to Italy, he probably had not foreseen the chance of having to open his house to receive the incubus of the whole Hunt family. Thus after the removal of the mollifying influence of Shelley, trouble soon ensued, and Hunt subsequently opened his burdened soul to the public in the volume, *Lord Byron and some of his Contemporaries.*

In conclusion, Dickens's testimony to his friend's integrity may be recorded. "In the midst of the sorest temptations, he maintained his honesty unblemished by a single stain. He was in all public and private transactions the very soul of truth and honor."

VI. LITTLE DORRIT

PATHOS, although not the highest form of art, can undoubtedly play a conspicuous rôle in fiction. Among pathetic figures Colonel Newcome holds a prominent position; and as pathetic stories *Paul and Virginia*, and Lamb's *Rosamund Gray* stand high. But for the elaboration of pathos, for the threading of the feeling into a whole novel, and the colouring of the entire book with various pathetic personalities and situations, it would be almost impossible to surpass Dickens's *Little Dorrit*.

Four of the five members of the Dorrit family are pathetic in various ways, the two elderly brothers, the young man, and Little Dorrit herself, all of them being the creatures of the circumstances that surround them. The only exception, thus affording an artistic contrast to the others, is the daughter Fanny, who has the talent

to elevate herself above her environment, and to steer her own way through the shoals and the difficult places of life. Mrs Clennam and Arthur Clennam are also pathetic figures, and the same may be said of some of the less prominent persons such as Flora Finching and young John Chivery.

Although this book has not stood the test of time quite so well as some of the others, yet it was wonderfully popular while it was being published, the sale of the monthly parts exceeding thirty-five thousand. The story is well told and it holds the reader's attention throughout, while Rigaud and Miss Wade provide a certain spice of mystery; moreover, the ring of truth and personal experience in many parts are thoroughly convincing. This merit appears with especial force in the scenes in the prison, and in Clennam's experiences at Mr Tite Barnacle's house and the "Circumlocution Office," and in the description of his visits to Mr Casby and to Mr and Mrs Plor-

nish, while the home life of Mr and Mrs Sparkler is well depicted. Mrs Clennam's character is consistently sustained, and the apparent unnaturalness of it at the outset, is quite sufficiently accounted for by the explanation in the sequel.

These accessory scenes and characters are excellent in their way, but the central part of the stage is rightly occupied by the hero and heroine, and especially by the interplay of their thoughtful minds, for the novel is not filled with great events. Thus the genius of the author is displayed in his power of rendering attractive and delightful the simple duties and avocations of ordinary people. In fact the lives of Arthur Clennam and Amy Dorrit may be regarded as a fascinating sermon with the Beatitudes for a text.

As an example of the production of a most impressive effect from commonplace materials the following passage is quoted, describing the termination of Clennam's first walk with Amy, in the course of which she had introduced him to her *protegée*

Maggy: "The courtyard received them at last, and then he said good-bye to Little Dorrit. Little as she had always looked, she looked less than ever when he saw her going into the Marshalsea lodge passage, the little mother attended by her big child. The cage door opened, and when the small bird reared in captivity, had tamely fluttered in; he saw it shut again; and then he came away." These simple words used to describe an absolutely ordinary scene, by their pathetic association, form a conclusion to the little episode that is perfect of its kind.

A companion picture is found in Clennam's announcement to Amy of the entire change of the family's circumstances:

> She dropped her work, and cried "Mr Clennam! What's the matter?"
>
> "Nothing, nothing. That is, no misfortune has happened. I have come to tell you something, but it is a piece of great good-fortune."
>
> "Good-fortune?"
>
> "Wonderful fortune!"
>
> They stood in a window, and her eyes full of

light, were fixed upon his face. He put an arm about her, seeing her likely to sink down. She put a hand upon that arm, partly to rest upon it, and partly to preserve their relative positions as that her intent look at him should be shaken by no change of attitude in either of them. Her lips seemed to repeat "Wonderful fortune?" He repeated it again aloud.

"Dear Little Dorrit! Your father." . . . Her breath was faint and hurried. Her heart beat fast. . . .

"Your father can be free within this week. . . . Remember we must go from here to tell him of it!"

That brought her back. Her eyes were closing, but they opened again.

"This is not all the good-fortune. This is not all the wonderful good-fortune, my dear Little Dorrit. Shall I tell you more?"

Her lips shaped, "Yes."

"Your father will be no beggar when he is free. He will want for nothing. Shall I tell you more? Remember! He knows nothing of it; we must go to him, from here, to tell him of it!"

She seemed to entreat him for a little time. He held her in his arm, and, after a pause, bent down his ear to listen.

"Did you ask me to go on?"

"Yes."

"He will be a rich man. He is a rich man. A great sum of money is waiting to be paid over to him as his inheritance; you are all henceforth very wealthy. Bravest and best of children, I thank Heaven that you are rewarded!"

As he kissed her, she turned her head towards his shoulder, and raised her arm towards his neck; cried out "Father! Father! Father!" and swooned away.

It may perchance seem to transcend the probabilities that, immediately on his return to England, Arthur should have been hot on the scent of Mrs Clennam's secret, and should have for no apparent reason connected it with Amy Dorrit. This remarkable penetration may in a measure be attributed to his subconscious love for Amy, while at the same time something must be allowed for poetic licence. It may also be thought that Clennam was unnaturally modest in failing to perceive that he had won Amy's love, and in needing the assurance of young John Chivery on the subject. After this discovery the climax is reached naturally and easily. Arthur, re-

covering from his illness in the prison by Amy's tender care, having previously declined to bind her to himself in wedlock because she was rich while he was poor, learns from her lips that she is once more as poor or poorer than he is himself, and thereupon he clasps her in his arms in loving tenderness and devotion.

In this novel our author affords further proof of his genius for weaving a most attractive story while dealing sledge-hammer blows at the social abuses of his time. The third chapter introduces the vexed subject of the opening of Museums and Picture Galleries on Sundays, and shows that Dickens was one who pointed the way towards such reforms in London.

It is quite probable that the amusing tirade against the methods of the "Circumlocution Office" was largely inspired by one of Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets, — Downing Street* — which had been issued a few years before the writing of *Little Dorrit*. In the course of his strictures on British government practice

Carlyle says: "Every colony, every agent for a matter colonial, has his tragic tale to tell you of his sad experiences in the Colonial Office; what blind obstructions, fatal indolences, pedantries, stupidities, on the right and on the left, he had to do battle with; what a world-wide jungle of red tape, inhabited by doleful creatures, deaf or nearly so to human reason or entreaty, he had entered on; and how he paused in amazement, almost in despair; passionately appealed now to this doleful creature, now to that, and to the dead red tape jungle, and to the living Universe itself, and to the Voices and to the Silences — and, on the whole, found that it was an adventure, in sorrowful fact, equal to the fabulous ones by old knights-errant against dragons and wizards in enchanted wildernesses and waste howling solitudes; not achievable except by nearly superhuman exercise of all the four cardinal virtues, and unexpected favour of the special blessing of Heaven. His adventure achieved or found unachievable, he has returned

with experiences new to him in the affairs of men. What this Colonial Office, inhabiting the head of Downing Street, really was, or had to do, or try doing, in God's practical Earth, he could not by any means precisely get to know; believes that it does not itself in the least precisely know. Believes that nobody knows; — that it is a mystery, a kind of Heathen myth; — and stranger than any piece of the old mythological Pantheon; for it practically presides over the destinies of many millions of living men."

The same indictment was applicable to most of the government departments; and Dickens, specially referring to the Home Office, reveals and vitalises the subject in his vivid and intensive manner, imprinting on the reader's mind a picture of the dilatory official methods which time cannot readily efface. He had most carefully prepared his case, the account being very true to fact, as many persons still living can distinctly remember, telling for instance how they were kept waiting behind

a glass partition, while the clerks at the other side were discussing in loud and unconcerned tones the details of their week-end sport.

As in certain of the other novels, some of the persons introduced are clearly drawn from the life. "Bar" and Merdle thus represent individuals prominent in the public eye. The original of "Bar" was Sir Fitzroy Kelly, a leading barrister who became attorney-general, and afterwards a judge. A humorous scene occurs when "Bar" meets Lord Decimus at a dinner-party at Merdle's house. "Bar . . . soon comes sliding up, double eye-glass in hand. Bar tendered the weather, as a subject neatly aloof from official reserve . . . said he was told there was to be no wall-fruit this year. Lord Decimus had not heard anything amiss of his peaches, but rather believed if his people were correct, he was to have no apples. No apples? Bar was lost in astonishment and concern. It would have been all one to him, in reality, if there had not been a pippin on the

face of the earth, but his show of interest in the apple question was positively painful. Now, to what, Lord Decimus — for we troublesome lawyers loved to gather information, and could never tell how useful it might prove to us — to what, Lord Decimus, was this to be attributed? Lord Decimus could not undertake to propound any theory about it. This might have stopped another man; but Bar, sticking to him fresh as ever, said 'As to pears now?' Long after Bar got made attorney-general, this was told of him as a masterstroke. Lord Decimus had a reminiscence about a pear-tree. . . .'' The leading portrait in the book is the re-introduction of John Dickens as William Dorrit, especially like the original in his stately periods and gracious condescending manner.

The old system of imprisonment for debt and its accompanying abuses are vigorously exposed. In this crusade one of the themes of *Pickwick* is revived, but here it receives far more effective treatment. Some time after the publication of

Little Dorrit the old system was abolished, and we may assert with confidence that the book aided in this beneficial change. The warm-hearted writer returns once more to his special topic of the callousness of the rich to the sufferings of the unfortunate poor, while he treats with humorous satire the manners of the *nouveaux riches*. Minor social phenomena portrayed by way of warning, include a description of the power of an unscrupulous rascal to deceive the public, and the foolish confidence of a large part of those with money to invest.

A small detail will serve to illustrate the sense of reality produced by this book. After the prison buildings had been dismantled, and the ground was laid out afresh, some land was left as an open space and named "Little Dorrit's Playground," while one of the new streets received the name of "Clenham Street," evidently a mistake for "Clennam Street."

Imprisonment for debt was abolished in England in 1869. Charles Dickens died in June 1870. Within four months after

that event Bismarck and Jules Favre were engaged in an important conference outside Paris. The Prussian had surrounded the city, and was ready to open fire upon it, while the Frenchman was using all his talents to prove the wisdom of refraining from doing so. Seated near them, awaiting the decision and reading a book, was the veteran von Moltke. The volume that held the field-marshal's interest was *Little Dorrit*. The present writer was pleased to find his opinion of the merits of the book coinciding with those expressed a few years since by Mr Bernard Shaw, when he described this novel as one of the greatest ever written in the English language.

VII. THE STUDENT OF SCOTT

CHARLES DICKENS was a warm admirer and close student of the writings of Sir Walter Scott, and the influence of the Great Magician of the North is clearly manifested in our author's works.

In the fourth chapter of *The Antiquary* it is told that Mr Jonathan Oldbuck had purchased a field, believing it to have been the site of a Roman camp, and that in this field he had found a stone inscribed with capital letters, to which he attributed a Roman origin; and how, while expatiating with wondrous learning on the subject of these camps, his theories were rudely shaken by the old beggar Edie Ochiltree, who informed him the stone had been cut by an acquaintance of his, and that the letters bore a quite commonplace meaning. In *Pickwick* after Mr Tupman had been joined by his friends at the "Leather Bottle" at Cobham, where he was found seek-

ing consolation for the loss of the Spinster Aunt in a first-rate dinner; Mr Pickwick, on strolling outside, discovered a small stone bearing an inscription so strange as to baffle the party. Supposing it to possess an antiquarian interest, the leader purchased it and took it to London. The description of his lecture on the subject at a meeting of the Club, with the subsequent revelation that the wording was "Bill Stumps, His Mark," crosses the borders of humor into the region of screaming farce.

In the penultimate chapter of *Rob Roy* Frank Osbaldistone relates in his narrative: ". . . I was left alone in the room of all others most calculated to inspire me with melancholy reflections. As twilight was darkening the apartment, Andrew had the sagacity to advance his head at the door, not to ask if I wished for lights, but to recommend them as a measure of precaution against the bogles, which still haunted his imagination. I rejected his proffer somewhat peevishly,

trimmed the wood-fire, and, placing myself in one of the large leathern chairs which flanked the old Gothic chimney, I watched unconsciously the bickering of the blaze which I had fostered. 'And this,' said I aloud, 'is the progress and the issue of human wishes! Nursed by the merest trifles, they are first kindled by fancy, nay, are fed upon the vapour of hope till they consume the substance which they inflame; and man, and his hopes, passions, and desires, sink into a worthless heap of embers and ashes!'

"There was a deep sigh from the opposite side of the room, which seemed to reply to my reflections. I started up in amazement. Diana Vernon stood before me, resting on the arm of a figure so strongly resembling that of the portrait so often mentioned, that I looked hastily at the frame, expecting to see it empty." It appeared shortly that Diana and her father were seeking safety at the Hall.

The corresponding scene occurs in *Little Dorrit* where Arthur Clennam is sur-

prised by the arrival of Amy and Maggy at his rooms: "... he sat before his dying fire, sorrowful to think upon the way by which he had come to that night, yet not strewing poison on the way by which other men had come to it. That he should have missed so much, and at his time of life should look so far about him for any staff to bear him company upon his downward journey and cheer it, was a just regret. He looked at the fire from which the blaze departed, from which the after-glow subsided, in which the ashes turned grey, from which they dropped to dust, and thought, 'How soon I too shall pass through such changes, and be gone!'

"To review his life, was like descending a green tree in fruit and flower, and seeing all the branches wither and drop off one by one, as he came down towards them.

" 'From the unhappy suppression of my younger days, through the rigid and unloving home that followed them, through my departure, my long exile, my return, my mother's welcome, my intercourse with

her since, down to the afternoon of this day with poor Flora,' said Arthur Clennam, 'what have I found!'

"His door was softly opened, and these spoken words startled him, and came as if they were an answer:

"'Little Dorrit.'

"Arthur Clennam rose hastily, and saw her standing at the door . . . 'My poor child! Here at midnight!'"

Andrew Fairservice in *Rob Roy,* who guides Frank Osbaldistone through the rough border country to Glasgow where Frank engages him as a personal servant, is probably to some extent a prototype of Sam Weller. The form of simile favoured by Sam has become known familiarly as a "Wellerism." An example occurs in the trial scene when Sam, asked whether in Mr Pickwick's service he has little to do and plenty to get, — replies "Oh quite enough to get, sir, as the soldier said ven they ordered him three hundred and fifty lashes." In the twenty-seventh chapter of *Rob Roy,* Andrew is

made to remark "Ower mony maisters, — ower mony maisters, as the paddock said to the harrow, when every tooth gae her a tig;" and towards the end of the chapter he observes, "There's sma' sorrow at our parting as the auld mear said to the broken cart." It is not here suggested that this humorous form of simile originated with Scott; in fact it may be found in Theocritus (Idyll XV, 77); but it seems likely that Dickens noted it while reading *Rob Roy,* and realised that he could turn it to excellent account.

Rob Roy himself is elsewhere quoted by Mr Micawber. That impecunious person had for prudential reasons been passing under an assumed name, and being again temporarily solvent, exclaimed, "My foot is on my native heath and my name is — Micawber!"

In *The Heart of Midlothian,* Jeanie Deans, when setting out on her walk from Edinburgh to London, encounters her admirer the Laird of Dumbiedikes on horseback, and is provided by him with money

for her journey. Nicholas Nickleby, starting on his walk from Dotheboys Hall to the metropolis, meets John Browdie on horseback, and receives some monetary assistance from him. In the same novel Scott gives a description of the Porteous Riots in Edinburgh, and subsequently in *Barnaby Rudge* Dickens describes the Lord George Gordon Riots in London.

The social gathering of lawyers' clerks with Mr Lowten as chairman at the tavern in London, described in *Pickwick,* much resembles the account in *Guy Mannering* of the meeting of lawyers in the Edinburgh hostelry presided over by Mr Pleydell. However it is by no means implied that Dickens was without personal experience of such festivities, but merely that his recollection of *Guy Mannering* probably suggested the introduction of the scene.

Towards the end of *Peveril of the Peak,* the Countess of Derby, addressing the King, remarks, "My liege, my household is of reputation;" to which the King re-

plies. "Nay, my lady, be not angry, I did but ask. Such things will befall in the best-regulated families." In the second chapter of *Pickwick* the King's phrase is used by Jingle, and in the twenty-eighth chapter of *David Copperfield* it is employed by Micawber. In his wonted style Jingle says, "All a mistake I see — never mind — accidents will happen — best-regulated families — never say die." With his usual impressive manner Micawber remarks, "My dear Copperfield, accidents will occur in the best-regulated families."

The nineteenth chapter of *Quentin Durward* contains a rapid description of the appearance of the streets of Liège in the fifteenth century, and in the thirty-second chapter of *Nicholas Nickleby* Dickens has a hurried description of the shops lining the main streets of London in his own days.

The twenty-fourth chapter of *Nicholas Nickleby* recounts the performance of a burlesque tragedy by Mr Vincent Crummles's theatrical company, which, though

only slightly outlined, is clearly intended for a grotesque parody of the plot of *Rob Roy,* for veiled reference is made to Rob Roy himself, to Helen MacGregor, to Bailie Nicol Jarvie, and his servant Mattie who accompanied him to the Glasgow jail with a lantern, and to the final dénouement when the marriage of the hero and heroine follows closely upon the deaths of most of their relatives.

The duty undertaken by Dominie Sampson, mentioned in the twentieth chapter of *Guy Mannering,* of arranging and cataloguing the books purchased from the library of the English bishop by Colonel Mannering, is closely paralleled by the work entrusted to Tom Pinch of arranging and cataloguing the collection of books stored in the chambers at the Temple, described in the thirty-ninth and fortieth chapters of *Martin Chuzzlewit.*

Scott writes, "Dominie Sampson was occupied body and soul in the arrangement of the late bishop's library, which had been sent from Liverpool by sea, and con-

veyed by thirty or forty carts from the seaport at which it was landed. Sampson's joy at beholding the ponderous contents of these chests arranged upon the floor of the large apartment, from whence he was to transfer them to the shelves, baffles all description. He grinned like an ogre, swung his arms like the sails of a windmill, and shouted 'Prodigious' till the roof rang to his raptures. . . . Books of theology and controversial divinity, commentaries, and polyglots . . . he entered them in the catalogue in his best running hand . . . and placed each individually on the destined shelf with all the reverence which I have seen a lady pay to a jar of old china."

Dickens's description is as follows: "On all the floors were piles of books, to the amount, perhaps, of some thousands of volumes; these, still in bales; those, wrapped in paper, as they had been purchased; others scattered singly or in heaps; not one upon the shelves which

lined the walls. To these Mr Fips called Tom's attention. 'Before anything else can be done, we must have them put in order, catalogued, and ranged upon the bookshelves, Mr Pinch. That will do to begin with, I think, sir.' Tom rubbed his hands in the pleasant anticipation of a task so congenial to his taste, and said: 'An occupation full of interest for me, I assure you.' . . . Tom attended to his duties daily, and made considerable progress with the books, which were already reduced to some sort of order, and made a great appearance in his fairly-written catalogue."

Reminiscent of Scott and of his imitator G. P. R. James, Dickens commences the *Pictures from Italy* thus: "On a fine Sunday morning in the Midsummer time and weather of eighteen hundred and forty-four, it was, my good friend, when — don't be alarmed; not when two travellers might have been observed slowly making their way over that picturesque and broken ground by which the first chapter

of a Middle Aged novel is usually attained — but when an English travelling-carriage of considerable proportions, fresh from the shady halls of the Pantechnicon near Belgrave Square, London, was observed (by a very small French soldier; for I saw him look at it) to issue from the gate of the Hôtel Meurice in the Rue Rivoli at Paris."

The plan of introducing royal and noble personages under some disguise of dress or name, to be revealed in their true character in the course of the story, did not originate with Scott, but is in his books of somewhat frequent occurrence. Thus for example in *Ivanhoe* Wilfred assumes the garb and rôle of a palmer to gain an interview with Rowena, and King Richard appears in the lists as an unknown combatant. In *The Talisman* Saladin adopts disguises, while the Prince of Scotland had joined in the Crusade as "Sir Kenneth;" an in *The Antiquary* Lovel proves eventually to be of noble birth.

Dickens does not provide much of this

sort of illusion, but in *Our Mutual Friend* John Rokesmith turns out to be John Harmon. As both characters are of quite minor rank, and the disclosure provokes small interest in the reader, one may perhaps be allowed to suggest that the mystery must have been intended for a parody on Scott's methods.

VIII. THE DICKENS COUNTRY

THE portion of Kent that has its centre at Rochester has been named the Dickens Country. In Charles's boyhood the family lived for a time at Chatham, and at Gad's Hill the great novelist resided and worked in his latter years; and there his earthly career came to its close. The district appears in various scenes in several of the novels, while the writer's tender feeling for it is indicated by the fact of his selecting Rochester Cathedral for his place of sepulchre. In this matter however his choice was frustrated, for the nation with no uncertain voice decided that its distinguished son should be laid in the national mausoleum, Westminster Abbey.

Kent, frequently called the garden county of England, is a fertile land embellished with many stately houses surrounded by beautiful parks. Of these Cobham Hall

is a typical example. The approach through the park from the Rochester side is the subject of an attractive paragraph in *Pickwick*: "A delightful walk it was: for it was a pleasant afternoon in June, and their way lay through a deep and shady wood, cooled by the light wind which gently rustled the thick foliage, and enlivened by the song of birds that perched upon the boughs. The ivy and moss crept in thick clusters over the old trees, and the soft green turf overspread the ground like a silken mat. They emerged upon an open park, with an ancient hall, displaying the quaint and picturesque architecture of Elizabeth's time. Long vistas of stately oaks and elm trees appeared on every side; large herds of deer were cropping the fresh grass; and occasionally a startled hare scoured along the ground, with the speed of the shadows thrown by the light clouds which sweep across a sunny landscape like a passing breath of summer."

When living at Gad's Hill, Dickens might be seen rambling through Cobham

Park and the neighboring lanes and pathways, his mind fully occupied in planning the course of the story on which he was engaged. This was frequently the case even when he had some companion on his walks, and the custom may have been embarrassing to a comrade unacquainted with his habits.

The rich red brickwork of Cobham Hall contrasts harmoniously with the spacious lawns and adjacent trees in early summer. The house consists of two large Tudor wings, and a central block of later period erected in the Italian style from the designs of Inigo Jones. The records of the ownership of the estate can be traced from an early date; one of the proprietors, Henry de Cobham, was a member of the group of itinerant judges during the reign of King John. In Edward III's time the property passed from John de Cobham to his daughter Joan, one of whose five husbands was Sir John Oldcastle, the noted leader of the Lollards, called Lord Cobham in right of his wife. He became

one of the early Protestant martyrs, and was burnt at the stake in St Giles's Fields, London, in the year 1418. Queen Elizabeth was a visitor at Cobham, and Charles I and Henrietta Maria slept in the house on their way to London, after having been married at Canterbury. At this period the estate belonged to the Stuarts, Dukes of Lennox, to whom it had been granted by King James. From that family it passed to the present owners, the house of Bligh, Earls of Darnley in the Irish peerage. Charles Dickens was on visiting terms with the Earl of Darnley of his day; and after the novelist's death his family presented to the Earl the Swiss châlet that was a feature at Gad's Hill, and now stands in Cobham Park. The châlet had been given to Dickens by his friend Fechter, the eminent actor, and it stood in a bower across the road, where it served the novelist as an alternative writing-room. The bower could be reached from Gad's Hill Place by a tunnel under the road. At Cobham Hall there is a gallery of

paintings by the Old Masters. The former gem of the collection, Titian's *Rape of Europa,* is now among the art treasures gathered by Mrs Gardner at Fenway Court, Boston.

On the northern side of Cobham Park, parallel with the main highway and joining it near Strood, is a road following the route of Roman Watling Street, crossing the River Medway at Rochester. One can picture in imagination the Roman legions in their victorious progress through the district, and after a while building the road to consolidate their conquests. The centuries roll on, and the road becomes the busy scene of pilgrimages to the shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket. Adjoining Cobham Park there is a reminder of these journeys in the remains of one of the places of refreshment for pilgrims and horses known as St Thomas's waterings. With the growth of London the traffic along the Dover road increases, and travelling merchants with their rich wares excite the cupidity of the lawless and reck-

less. At Gad's Hill is perpetrated the robbery by Falstaff and his companions with its amusing sequel described in Shakespeare. At a later period swift mail coaches carry travellers to Dover on their way to the Continent. In June 1815 a private post-chaise hastens towards London with the bearer of Wellington's despatch announcing the victory at Waterloo; and to-day automobiles travel the road, carrying modernity into the realms of the historic past.

Much of the interest of the Dickens country is focused at Canterbury. In this ancient city was the school of Dr Strong, attended by young David Copperfield; and here he lodged at the house of Mr Wickfield, and met the daughter Agnes and the clerk Uriah Heep. The long low lattice windows bulging out on the sidewalk are characteristic of the older portions of the city. The eldest Miss Larkins, one of David's schoolboy flames, bore a name familiar at that period in the locality. Dickens would occasionally drive

guests from Gad's Hill to visit the glorious cathedral and the other relics of bygone ages. Though to-day the name of Becket awakens only an antiquarian interest, yet this spot hallowed by the preaching of Saint Augustine must always attract members of the great Anglo-Saxon family of every clime; so that a *Canterbury Pilgrimage* forms a holiday diversion both for English people and for visitors from over the water. Lovers of Chaucer will be sure to examine the remains of the inn called the Checquers of the Hope mentioned in the Tales.

In the Chatham days Dickens had frequently walked to Gad's Hill with his father, and had gazed with admiration at Gad's Hill Place. In later life he wrote a short magazine article recalling these youthful experiences in a fanciful manner, imagining the dual personality of his mature self conversing with his boyhood's entity: "'You admire that house?' said I. 'Bless you, sir,' said the very queer small boy, 'when I was not more than half

as old as nine it used to be a treat for me to be brought to look at it. And now I am nine I come by myself to look at it. And ever since I can recollect, my father, seeing me so fond of it, has often said to me — "If you were to be very persevering and were to work hard, you might some day come to live in it." 'Though that's impossible,' said the very queer small boy, drawing a low breath, and now staring at the house with all his might. I was rather amazed to be told this by the very queer small boy; for that house happens to be my house, and I have reason to believe that what he said was true."

It is not often that a childish wish can be so completely satisfied in later life, but Dickens was a man of strong determination, and at the age of forty-three he accidentally heard that the property was for sale. The owner, Mrs Lynn Linton, found him to be a very willing purchaser, and she made a good bargain. The house stands opposite the Sir John Falstaff Inn at the top of the hill overlooking the Med-

way, on the highway between Rochester and Gravesend. His closest neighbour was the innkeeper, a certain Edwin Trood, whose name in slightly altered form was used by the novelist in his last story. An old guide-book says, "Near the twenty-seventh stone from London is Gadshill, supposed to have been the scene of the robbery mentioned by Shakespeare in his play of Henry IV; there being reason to think also that it was Sir John Falstaff of truly comic memory who under the name of Oldcastle inhabited Cooling Castle of which the ruins are in the neighborhood." The actual fact was that Sir John Oldcastle resided at Cooling Castle, and is believed to have been an associate of the Prince of Wales, afterwards Henry V. Clearly the author of the play intended to travesty Oldcastle in creating Falstaff, for the character was in the first sketch named Oldcastle, and in one or two places was so printed; but it is certain that Oldcastle was serious rather than comic, and that he was grossly and wantonly cari-

catured and misrepresented in the person of Falstaff. He assumes his true historic character in the doubtful Shakespeare play, *Sir John Oldcastle.*

The ruins of Cooling Castle stand contiguous to the village of Cooling. Cooling and Cliffe, adjacent villages, give their names to the marshes lying between the high land surrounding Gad's Hill and the Thames. The river is in places banked up to prevent the low-lying alluvial lands from being inundated. In this district, described in *Great Expectations,* there is a strange sight of ships gliding along the river at a level above that of the adjoining fields. This country attracted the artist Turner who painted scenes on the Medway and the Thames.

Westward of Cobham Park lies the village of Cobham with its church dating from the fourteenth century, restored under the supervision of the late Sir Gilbert Scott. On the chancel floor are the celebrated Cobham Brasses, commemorating the families of Cobham and Brooke and

the Masters of the former Cobham College. The college building now serves for almshouses. It contains a large hall with painted windows, an old oak screen, and cut-stone fireplace. The college or chantry dated from the time of Edward III, and was endowed by the Cobham family, to whom it reverted at the Dissolution. Mine host of the "Leather Bottle" at Cobham possesses a varied collection of Dickens relics. The originals of Muggleton (possibly Maidstone), Dingley Dell, and other places with fancy names may be found in the same neighbourhood.

Rochester must be recognised as the real core of the Dickens country—Rochester with its gothic cathedral, the ruins of a monastery and of a feudal castle, the fine bridge over the river Medway, and other historic buildings. Here is Satis House where Queen Elizabeth was lodged on one of her numerous journeys, and the quaint name is transferred by our author to the home of Miss Havisham which he

places in the same city. The Bull Inn can claim the distinction of having been visited by Queen Victoria as well as by Mr Pickwick and his friends. From the old bridge that renowned personage contemplated nature while waiting for breakfast, and when this bridge was taken down, Dickens received one of the balusters as a memento, placing it at Gad's Hill as a pedestal for a sun-dial. Thinly veiled as "Cloisterham," Rochester is the main scene in *Edwin Drood,* the heroine Rosa Bud and Helena Landless being boarders at the Nuns' House school. The building, abutting on the High Street, is now used as a municipal museum and contains some Dickens mementoes. Near at hand is an institution described in one of our author's short stories, Watts's Charity for "six poor Travellers who not being Rogues or Proctors may receive gratis for one night Lodging, Entertainment, and Four pence each."

We append two descriptions by Dickens

of Rochester Castle and Cathedral; the one dating from the early and buoyant years is quoted from Jingle, and the other is a passage from the closing chapter of *Edwin Drood,* almost the last words put on paper by the tired worker before the final rest:

"Ah! fine place — glorious pile — frowning walls — tottering arches — dark nooks — crumbling staircases — Old cathedral too — earthy smell — pilgrims' feet worn away the old steps — little Saxon doors — confessionals like money-takers boxes at theatres — queer customers those monks — Popes, and Lord Treasurers, and all sorts of old fellows, with great red faces, and broken noses, turning up every day — buff jerkins too — matchlocks — sarcophagus — fine place — old legends too — strange stories: capital."

And then, from *Edwin Drood,* "A brilliant morning shines on the old city. Its antiquities and ruins are surpassingly beautiful, with a lusty ivy gleaming in the sun, and the rich trees waving in the balmy air. Changes of glorious light from moving boughs, songs of birds, scents from gardens, woods and fields — or, rather from the one great garden of the whole cultivated island in its yielding

time — penetrate into the Cathedral, subdue its earthly odour, and preach the Resurrection and the Life. The cold stone tombs of centuries ago grow warm; and flecks of brightness dart into the sternest marble corners of the building, fluttering there like wings."

A LIST OF BOOKS

Dickens the Immortal, by Edward Basil Lupton, LL.M., of the University of Cambridge. A book of appreciative and provocative essays of interest to all lovers of the Immortal Charles Dickens. Price $2.00 per copy.

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